

Q&As for Vegetation Treatments Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
Notice of Availability of Draft Vegetation Treatments Using Aminopyralid, Fluroxypyr, and Rimsulfuron on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

What is the Vegetation Treatments Programmatic EIS?

The vegetation treatments Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) evaluates the viability of using aminopyralid, fluroxypyr, and rimsulfuron herbicides as part of BLM vegetation treatment programs. The PEIS includes an analysis, per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), on the effects of using the three new herbicide active ingredients to treat vegetation on public lands in the western U.S., including Alaska. The document incorporates by reference information from the 2007 Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (2007 PEIS). The preferred alternative in the Draft PEIS is to approve the use of three new herbicide active ingredients on public lands, which would increase the number of approved active ingredients available for use on public lands from 18 to 21.

Where would the proposed actions occur?

The new herbicides could be utilized on public lands administered by the BLM in the western U.S. and Alaska. The majority of these lands are in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Field offices and personnel would not be required to use the three herbicides unless they deem it appropriate.

Will the EIS include National Monuments and National Conservation Areas?

Yes, since the 2007 PEIS included these lands in its analysis. These units are already included as part of the broad programmatic treatment area to the extent that conservation and restoration project work, including invasive and noxious weed treatments, are allowed by the individual National Landscape Conservation System proclamations.

EIS Development Process

Why is the BLM developing this Programmatic EIS?

The BLM is preparing a Programmatic EIS to evaluate the potential for use of three new herbicide active ingredients for the conservation and restoration of vegetation, watershed functions, and fish and wildlife habitat on surface lands administered by the BLM in the western U.S., including Alaska.

Is this Programmatic EIS a land-use plan?

No, this EIS is not a land-use plan. The scope of this EIS is restricted to assessing the viability of incorporating treatments with the three new herbicide active ingredients into existing vegetation treatment strategies.

What is the difference between a Programmatic EIS and project-specific EIS?

A Programmatic EIS is designed to look at the broad, general impacts associated with a decision to fully implement a program or additional treatment. A Programmatic EIS also allows for the

tiering of more site-specific NEPA documents, such as land-use plans, eliminating the need for repetitive discussions of the same issues. A project-specific EIS looks at impacts associated with a site-specific project, such as vegetation treatment activities on 1,000 acres of BLM-administered lands.

Who is developing the Programmatic EIS?

The BLM Office of Forest, Range, Riparian and Plant Conservation in Washington, D.C., is leading the project, supported by BLM technical resource specialists in BLM offices throughout the western U.S. and Alaska.

Potential Issues to Be Examined in the Programmatic EIS

Does this Programmatic EIS involve controversial issues?

It is anticipated that most public scrutiny will focus on issues associated with the use of new herbicide active ingredients to control noxious weeds and other undesirable vegetation. Specific issues to be addressed in the EIS include the effects of the three new herbicide active ingredients on human and environmental health, on threatened and endangered species, and on resources used by Native Americans and Alaska Native groups.

Will there be an assessment of risks to the public and the environment from the use of the three new herbicide active ingredients?

Ecological risk assessments (ERAs) and a human health risk assessment (HHRA) have been completed as part of the Programmatic EIS process to be used in support of the assessment of potential impacts of the new herbicide active ingredients. Aminopyralid, fluroxypyr, and rimsulfuron have been deemed effective in controlling target vegetation and have minimal effects on the environment and human health if used properly. They would replace the use of several herbicide active ingredients used by the BLM that are potentially more toxic to plants and animals than the three new herbicide active ingredients. Aminopyralid has been registered under the USEPA's reduced risk initiative.

Is there a process to determine which new chemicals the BLM can use to control vegetation?

The 2007 PEIS includes protocols that the BLM follows to evaluate new chemicals that may be used in the future by the agency. New herbicide active ingredients could only be used if they are: (1) registered for use by the EPA; (2) used for treatment of appropriate vegetation types and at application rates specified on the label directions; and (3) determined by the BLM to be safe to humans and the environment, based on an analysis of their potential toxicological and environmental impacts.

Public Involvement

How can the public comment on the program?

Public comments will be accepted for 45 days after the publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Public comments can be submitted to blm_wo_vegeis@blm.gov or on the project website <http://blm.gov/3vkd>.